An Essential Guide to PLYMOUTH

Front cover: Eddystone Lighthouse by Extravagantni (Getty Images)

Back cover: Plymouth Hoe by Rott70 (Getty Images)

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First of all, I would like to offer a very heartfelt 'thank you' to everyone who supported me in creating this project, even though it is neither particularly large nor especially grand. I appreciate every bit of help I received – from simple suggestions of pleasant places for a cup of tea to people kindly sending me tourist guides to Plymouth they once used. Over these several months that I have spent writing my brochure, I talked to hundreds of residents, and every single one of them suggested something new to me. It is largely their achievement that this tiny piece has come true. I convert my biggest gratitude to them, for their wish to help and for their love of Plymouth, Devon, England, and the United Kingdom.

Thank you.

Now, Plymouth might not be a popular tourist destination. I have to admit there are cities across Britain that will seem more attractive and will have more museums, restaurants, galleries... yet since the beginning of my writing career two years ago, my only aim was to show that every place in the United Kingdom is beautiful and worth loving. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder; I repeat this phrase tirelessly for years. Plymouth has its own secrets and curiosities, has its own gems and prominent residents. Through this brochure, I hope to introduce you to Britain's Ocean City.

And I very much hope you will enjoy it.

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An Essential Guide To Truro
Everything You Need to Know About Cornwall

All of her works are free and are accessible online. Her initiative to promote British culture can be supported via Buy Me a Coffee (links at the beginning)

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HISTORY

Mayflower 1620 Memorial Stone. Photo by Clément Proust (Pexels)

Evidence of human presence in Devon dates back to the Palaeolithic period, with remains of early Homo sapiens found in limestone caves elsewhere in the county, dating to approximately 50,000 to 12,000 years ago. While no such caves are known within Plymouth itself, these discoveries show that humans inhabited the wider region long before the city emerged. The beginnings of Plymouth itself take place at Mount Batten peninsula, where archaeologists found tin and copper as old as the late Bronze Age. It was suggested that the settlement on it played the role of a port and a trading community, which began to decline during the Iron Age as the trading patterns shifted, and the natural harbour of Plymouth Sound gained the main importance.

At that time, this land was a part of the Celtic Dumnonii tribe, which, apart from Devon, also included Cornwall and a tiny piece of Somerset. People of the tribe had spoken a dialect of Southwestern Brythonic, the closest languages to which are Cornish and Breton. Dumnonia was also sometimes visited by the Irish migrants, known as the Déisi, as stones featuring Ogham script, specific to Ireland only, were found.

With the arrival of the Romans in 43 AD, the port of Mount Batten still managed to keep afloat, yet was outshone by the village of Sutton, the future Plymouth. But even though it was still far from being a major settlement. Meanwhile Dumnonii tribe shifted to the kingdom of Dumnonia in the 4th century AD, entering the period of post-Roman Britain. Considering the specificity of the era, it is hard to say what was happening to Sutton at that time. But what is known to historians is that in 1086, when the Domesday Book was finally completed, the manor of Sutton was listed there. Later, the possession went to the Valletort family, whose residence was located in Trematon Castle in present-day Cornwall. Sutton, the small harbour village, did not remain with them for long and was soon gifted to the Augustinian priory at nearby Plympton, a town on the River Plym that had once been a separate stannary. Plympton, under the Augustinians' rule, was granted a market charter in 1254 and later incorporated as an independent town in 1439. Meanwhile, Sutton gradually grew in importance thanks to its natural harbour, eventually outpacing Plympton and adopting the name Plymouth. During this period, Plympton was still a separate town, not incorporated into Plymouth (this was done only in 1967), and faced a severe problem to solve: it became a target for French coastal raids during the ongoing Hundred Years' War. There was even an attempt to get into the town, in which consequence a manor house was burned, and several prisoners were taken, yet the English managed to fend off the attack. A similar history occurred sometime later, and this time Plympton was occupied for a short time and burnt.

The oldest building in the city, the Prysten house, also originates from the same century; the construction process was finished in 1498.

But despite all the difficulties and hardships, Plymouth managed to become a popular port, which hosted plenty of important ships, including the one that brought Napoleon, Catherine of Aragorn and Pocahontas to England, and became home to several celebrated admirals, including Sir Francis Drake. According to the legend, Francis Drake was playing a game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe when he was told that the Spanish Armada had been spotted. He is said to have remained calm, insisting on finishing the game before taking action. While occupied with bowls, changes in the wind and tide worked to the advantage of the English fleet and contributed to the Armada's defeat. A year later, the newly constructed Counter-Armada was resting in Plymouth Port. Wealthy merchants, also residing here, preferred to build their elegant possessions in the Barbican quarter, and some of them can still be admired.

At the beginning of the 17th century, James I of England ordered the Plymouth Company to send several ships to North America to establish a settlement there. The famous Mayflower began its journey from the local port. The land where the passengers landed was named New Plymouth, and this story deserves a little track-off from the main topic.

The Mayflower was an English pilgrim ship which famously carried 135 people to the New World in 1620. Its passengers, English Separatists, also called Pilgrims, were dissatisfied with the Church of England, and their attempts to reform it were rather unsuccessful. So, upset with the state of things, Puritans moved to Holland, whose society was tolerant towards people of other denominations. But even though the new country did not prosecute them, Separatists, as Puritans were also called, were afraid that their kids would lose their origin and become too Dutch, and the overall quality of life was low due to low-paying jobs and cultural differences. Separatists still wanted to establish a real community. With that thought, Puritans in Holland made the decision to establish their own community with their own rules.

The journey to what is now the USA was quite risky, as all of the attempts before the Mayflower voyage could be described as "tragic, with only some settlers surviving the journey and the first winter in their new communities".

Initially, it was predicted that a journey to the land so far (Plymouth Colony is in the Northeast of the USA) would require two ships and would be finished in October. Firstly, Puritans had to return to England on two ships – Speedwell and Mayflower. After a short stop in Southampton, a leak on Speedwell was discovered, and the pilgrims had to repair it quickly. Yet after departure, Speedwell started leaking again, so another anchor in Dartmouth was made, which did not help, so after another stop in Plymouth, the Pilgrims had to cram on the Mayflower, as Speedwell was abandoned. Their provisions were tough, and the living space, made for 102 instead of 135 passengers only, required tightening the belts. First fatalities began even before reaching the New World due to storms, yet desperate voyagers now had no way back. While still in the open water, a baby boy was born on the ship, Oceanus Hopkins, and he even survived the trip, but later died at the age of seven in a newly established colony.

However, apart from glorious adventures, the city also faced times of hardship. During the English Civil War, Plymouth supported Parliamentarians, while the rest of Devon was held by Royalists. Surprisingly, for four years of siege, witty locals still found a way to transfer goods and live quite a decent life for the time, compared to the rest of England. And just after the Restoration in 1665, the Royal Citadel was built, and canons facing the sea and the city were installed to prevent any similar conflict outbreak.

The 18th century was the period of cultural rise. The first theatre was built in Plymouth in 1762, followed by its first bank just ten years after. John Foulston, the renowned English architect, enhanced the city with elegant Greek Revival buildings, even though most of them can now only be viewed in pictures.

With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, Plymouth's economy shifted. Teamships and railways changed transport patterns, and the city increasingly focused on naval and passenger traffic. For the same reason, Plymouth received its first railway in 1848 and the renowned Royal Albert Bridge, connecting it to Cornwall, in 1859. Yet the downside of the rapid growth was the rising house prices, which forced unprivileged workers to cram into dirty slums. The sanitary situation in the city was one of the worst in Europe at the time, and in fact, only rivalled by that

of Warsaw. Luckily, the existing problem was resolved after a government report with the documentation of the horrific conditions, and local authorities conducted a slum clearance and housing improvements. Another problem faced by the city was a decline in the naval industry after the First World War, intensified by the Great Depression in the 1930s. By 1915, there were around 20,000 workers employed in the docks. In the 1930s, this number fell to 11,000.

Unfortunately, that was not the hardest war for Plymouth. With the advance of Nazi soldiers in Europe, Plymouth quickly fell under the threat of becoming a German target. Even though it was not an important dock city anymore, it was located near the English Channel, which was crucial for moving troops, ships, and supplies. Germans wanted to disrupt anything crossing there. The first bombs fell on Plymouth on the 6th of July 1940, killing three people. The major raids phase lasted until 1941, with some also taking place in 1944. The pre-war population of 220,000 shrank to 127,00 due to people hastily leaving. Another 1,172 were killed, and almost 4,500 were injured. Even though the city had raid shelters, sometimes they could not withstand the cruel attacks. On the 22nd of April 1941, Portland Square communal shelter was directly hit, and out of seventy-three people, only three survived. Plymouth was one of Britain's most heavily bombed cities, with many civilian structures being destroyed – churches, schools, shops, and cinemas. In 59 raids, 3,754 houses were destroyed, and 18,398 were seriously damaged.

The restoration plan was introduced in 1941 and required the complete eradication of the previous planning. Surprisingly, heavily damaged Plymouth became the only British city to fully complete the plan, with the final touch of work being finished in 1962. However, the evidence of German crimes is discovered in Plymouth even today, with the latest 250kg (551lbs) Nazi SC250 air-dropped bomb being discovered and neutralised in May 2026.

Currently, Plymouth is twinned with Brest, France, and Gdynia, Poland.

NICE TO KNOW...

Romantic Sunset at Plymouth Waterfront. Photo by Nizam (Pexels)

Plymouth has many more interesting facts to explore. They do not fit into the 'history' chapter, as they are not of specific importance; yet still offer an alternative and funnier approach to the heritage of the city.

Dinosaurs

Even though being dead for several million years, dinosaurs are everywhere – at amusement parks, in children's books, in films... but this commonly used word, which fuels tens of industries, was said for the first time at the Guildhall in Devonport. Sir Richard Owen, palaeontologist, a leading comparative anatomist and the first director of London's Natural History Museum, used it in his speech in July 1841 to describe a discovery of giant reptile fossils (from Greek words deinos "terrible" and sauros "lizard". The term formally appeared in Owen's 1842 report, defining a distinct group of giant fossil reptiles like Megalosaurus and Iguanodon.

Last public execution

On the Hoe, there is a cross with the number '3' embedded in the pavement between the Naval Memorial and the Hoe Lodge Gardens. It marks the spot where, on 6 th July 1797, three Royal Marines were executed by firing squad after being charged with Mutiny. A further group of sailors were hung from the yardarms of their ships in the Sound.
It was Plymouth's last public execution.

American Prisoners of War

At the bottom of Citadel Road, by the roundabout adjacent to the Duke of Cornwall hotel, are the posts of the main gate of Millbay Park. The Eastern post has a Plymouth plaque, whilst on the West is one remembering Mill Gaol, where 1500 US POWs were detained during the War for American Independence 1777-83.

The Zoo

While strolling through Central Park, try to imagine cages with animals, popcorn stalls, and balloon sellers. That is exactly how this part of Plymouth looked from 1962 to 1978, when it used to have a zoo and partially a quarantine centre for lions, giraffes, elephants, and penguins, before animals went to other zoos. At its height, Plymouth Zoo was hugely popular, attracting 50,000 visitors a year, but at some point it started to decline, and a decision to close the attraction was finally made.

Napoleon

Before sailing to St Helena for life banishment, Napoleon was held prisoner at sea just off Plymouth Sound. It was a widely known fact - Journal of the Private Life and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon at Saint Helena by the Count de las Cases quotes "It was known that he always appeared on deck towards five o'clock. A short time before this hour, all the boats collected alongside each other; there were thousands, and so closely connected, that the water could no longer be seen between them; they looked more like a multitude assembled in a public square than anything else." Jules Girardet even made a painting showing elegant ladies on boats and gentlemen in black frocks waving at the ship where Napoleon was held - "Napoleon on HMS Bellerophon in Plymouth Sound". So, for a short time, a belligerent Frenchman became a local celebrity and would come out to the deck daily to entertain people.

Porcelain

It is a well-known fact that the birthplace of porcelain is China. Today, beautiful tea sets are popular all across the world, and every self-respecting English lady keeps at least one white cup in her house. But if not Plymouth, the portraits of Queen Elizabeth would not be painted on elegant sets, for the first factory to produce true hard-paste porcelain in England was founded in this very city by William Cookworthy in 1768. Even though the factory soon moved to Bristol, Plymouth is an undeniable birthplace of British porcelain.

WHAT TO DO AND SEE

Plymouth Barbican. Photo by Matt Stansfield (Getty Images)

LANDMARKS

The Hoe. Photo by Ian Wool (Getty Images)

Plymouth might not be on top of British tourist destinations, yet it absolutely does not mean one will not find something interesting to see here. And quite on the contrary, Plymouth is a lovely place to explore, with a rich history. Let me kindly introduce you to the top spots of Britain's Ocean City, loved and cherished by both locals and visitors.

Leviathan

Plymouth has an undeniably close connection to the maritime industry, history, and culture. Being nicknamed "Britain's Ocean City", it is no wonder that there are many museums and monuments dedicated to this part of Plymouth's life. But right in front of the place where Pilgrims set sail on the legendary Mayflower stands a less noticeable *Leviathan*.

Originally, Leviathan was a grim monster creature from the Bible. Therefore, some prefer to call the statue a Barbican Prawn, even though it is not a prawn but an animal combining a carcass of a lobster, the body of a John Dory, and the tail of a plesiosaurus. This landmark was issued by Plymouth Council in 1996, and has since become something of a local symbol. It is worth taking a picture of it when passing by.

Tinside Lido

While not being famous for its beaches, Plymouth still has a place where one can have plenty of fun doing watersports or relaxing in the sun while enjoying a mesmerising view of Plymouth port. The beautiful open-air swimming pool in Art Deco style was first opened in 1935. But lower and lower interest over the years almost led to its closure in 1992 if not for the opposition of the locals, who established a campaign to highlight the importance of the Lido and to find a way to renovate it to its former glory, thanks to whom the pool is still open for visitors today.

To reach the Lido, one will have to walk through Hoe Park, a lush, green space right near the sea. It is full of beautiful monuments, dedicated to numerous historical events of importance to Plymouth and England, such as the statue of Sir Francis Drake. However, the most famous landmark is undoubtedly 18th-century Smeaton's Tower, an easily recognisable lighthouse and true symbol of the city, visible from the pool itself.

Beatle Bums

There is not a single Briton who has never heard of the Beatles. But there are definitely many fewer Britons who heard about a creative way of commemorating them on one of Plymouth's lanes. In 1967, the iconic group was filming their The Magical Mystery Tour, and made a photo of themselves sitting on the grass in the Hoe Park and pointing at the sea, with a Tinside Lido being visible behind them. In 2016, a copper print of their bums with a psychedelic pattern from the 1960s appeared on the exact place where the Fab Four once sat, and now draws plenty of attention from the fans of British Music.

Prysten House

Due to not being listed in many travel guides, Prysten House can be easily missed while walking around Plymouth. At first sight, it is a usual old granite house, with hundreds of similar houses around England. But if one digs a bit deeper into its history, one would discover that the very building one is looking at is not a simple hut, but one of the oldest dwellings in the city, luckily not

Leviathan. Photo by Clement Proust (Pexels)

destroyed by the intense bombings during the Second World War.

Once it belonged to a wealthy merchant, Thomas Yogge, by whose order Prysten House was built in the 1490s. More than six hundred years later, it is still open to visitors – a *Knead Pizza* restaurant, owned by local entrepreneurs, works on the first floor where a Tudor household once lived and prepared equally tasty dishes.

The Royal Citadel

This monument was constructed by the petition of legendary Francis Drake himself. In the 16th century, during the Golden Age under the rule of Elizabeth I, it became clear that Britain's Ocean City must have better defences in case of attack. And so, the construction of a beautiful Tudor Drake's Fort started by 1592, lasting four long years. But it was not until King Charles II that the construction of the citadel itself began. Most of the original building was reshaped to place a strong bastion on the entrance to the harbour with gun platforms overlooking the townscape, and ensure that Plymouth would remain loyal to the Crown in the upcoming English Civil War. Centuries later, the Citadel was still in use to defend Britain's south coast, especially during armed conflicts with France, and later in World War II. It did not cease its function even now – the Royal Citadel is still owned by the British military forces, making it one of the oldest active military bases in the UK.

The Barbican

The Barbican is rather a part of the city rather than a standalone tourist spot. It belongs to the Sutton Port just near the sea, and luckily, it miraculously escaped German bombings during WWII. By "Barbican", locals mean the remains of medieval walls of Sutton town, now a part of Plymouth; therefore, it is one of the oldest spots in the town. Here, apart from strolling around and sightseeing traditional English streets with the largest concentration of cobbled streets in Britain and over 100 listed buildings, one can also find other tourist attractions, such as Elizabethan House or Plymouth Gin Distillery.

Plymouth Gin Distillery

One of the foremost (and important) English inventions is definitely gin, a strong beverage made from juniper berries. The most prominent of all gins is London Dry Gin, invented during the so-called gin craze, and the gin tonic, even though originally made in India for the purposes more grim. And true connoisseurs of a good drink must visit the Plymouth Distillery, the oldest working distillery in England, following one recipe since 1973. It is also stationed in a building of great historical significance, being erected as early as the 1400s. Apart from trying new flavours and combinations, the Distillery also offers guided tours for those wishing to know the secrets of the oldest English gin.

The Mayflower Museum

The significance of this name need not be explained. It is a great part of Plymouth's vast marine history, being only one of the great voyages started here. There is a lot to explore on the three spacious floors, starting from the history of numerous English voyages to the New World, relationships between newcomers and indigenous societies, including the relationships between English pilgrims and Wampanoag, the tribe that inhabited the land where Mayflower travelers dropper an anchor. Even four hundred years later, the Museum was able to find the descendants of the first voyagers and the first Wampanoags, and their faces can now be observed on the exhibition.

Ruins of Charles Church. Photo by CrazyLegs14 (Pixabay)

There are also some interactive animations and exhibits for kids.

Near the museum, the Mayflower Steps memorial can be found. According to the legend, it was the departure point of the legendary ship. Yet according to some, it is not the right place, and where the monument should stand is near the Admiral MacBride pub on the Barbican.

Royal William Yard

This waterfront place is one of the major tourist destinations of the city, being one of the largest collections of Grade 1 listed military buildings in all of Europe, erected between 1825 and 1831. The Yard blends historical English architecture with modern eateries, shops, and venues, so here one can combine business with pleasure. Proximity to the sea and such bountiful beaches as Firestone Bay or Devil's Point make a walk around especially delightful, with lovely views of Plymouth's seaside and elegant yachts.

The Box

If one searches for a unique art exhibition, The Box is the perfect place. It is a museum and art gallery with free entry, constantly housing temporary exhibitions of fine and decorative art, arranging creative workshops, and providing space for family tours and events. It is also strongly connected to the local heritage, incorporating elements from the former Plymouth City Museum and Record Office, such as historical photos of what life in Ocean City was once like. Together, the Box owns more than two million items, so everyone would find something to one's taste.

KARST

But if one searches for something contemporary, one should visit KARST. Similar to the Box, KARST is a free-entry independent contemporary art gallery within a short walk from Plymouth city centre, hosting plenty of temporary exhibitions by various artists both from the United Kingdom and abroad, trying to combine different themes, colours, and topics raised by the paintings or statues.

National Marine Aquarium

Where can one find the deepest aquarium habitat and the largest viewing window in all of Britain, if not in its Ocean City? Around 5,000 wild sea animals had never been so close to look at. But if just wandering around beautifully decorated domains and creatures of all shapes and colours, the Aquarium offers some unique experiences for the whole family, including sleeping in the hall with a shark tank, practising yoga in the pale blue light of the building surrounded by enchanting fish, or even feeding turtles with the food you have just prepared.

Plymouth Synagogue

No matter whether you are Jewish or not, this landmark is quite an important place on the map of the city. This synagogue was built in 1764, making it the oldest synagogue built by the Jewish subgroup Ashkenazi (primarily from Germany and the Netherlands) in the whole English-speaking world, comprising 88 countries. Hidden away in St Catherine's Street, it is one of only two buildings in this street to survive the bombings in the Second World War. And though from the outside, the building looks rather quiet and blends in, the interior is most remarkable and unique.

Sunrise over Devonport Dockyard. Photo by Mick Blakey (Getty Images)

St Andrew's Church

Even though Plymouth has its 'main' cathedral (St. Mary & St. Boniface's Cathedral), I also advise visiting St Andrew's Church. It was built in the mid-15th century in the town of Sutton, probably on the site of an 7th century Anglo-Saxon church. Here, Katherine of Aragorn attended a Thanksgiving mass right after coming to England from her journey from Spain. Another well-known figure, prominent scientist Charles Darwin, was baptised in this church. Unfortunately, the building was damaged during the Blitz in March 1941, yet was renewed as close to the initial look as possible after the war. While strolling around, one may notice a door with a 'Resurgam' (Latin for *I shall rise*) plaque above it. It comes from the Blitz times and was carved after the building suffered from heavy bombings.

Saltram

Devon is full of elegant and mesmerising English manors. But while most of them are tucked away in the quiet countryside, Saltram stands right near the bustling city of Plymouth. It is an 18th-century building of an expanded original Tudor house, deemed by some as the most enchanting country house in Devon and one of the best preserved examples of early Georgian architecture, with a lovely garden and woodland nearby, overlooking the Plymouth Sound. There are hiking and cycling trails to explore, several eateries, a dog café, and a souvenir shop.

Film lovers might also recognise Saltram from the 1995 adaptation of Sense and Sensibility, where the house appeared as the grand Norland Park, home of the Dashwood family. Its stately interiors, sweeping staircases, and timeless gardens perfectly captured the refined elegance of Georgian England, making it an ideal backdrop for the beloved classic. With Jane Austen charm woven into every corner, it is easy to see why the estate continues to enchant visitors today.

Dartmoor Zoo

The place is not located in the city directly, and to reach it, one would need to walk for an hour. Therefore, I do recommend visiting it by car, and as a lovely side to the main trip around Plymouth, or if one has children curious about animals. Here they will be able to see well-known creatures such as tigers, capybaras, as well as species threatened in the wild or generally unseen in the zoos, like potoroos, Kirk's dik-diks, or peccaries. There are also some birds and amphibians to see, yet the main focus is on the mammals. The territory of the facility is not particularly large, so it will not take more than two hours to fully satisfy the curiosity of the smallest ones and not tire them simultaneously.

Elizabethan House

The Elizabethan House offers a fascinating journey through over 400 years of history, with its origins dating back to 1599. One will be able to see how life in England was during the British Golden Age, right before the end of the Tudor Era. While exploring the rooms, one may step into the lives of the people who once called it home, gaining insight into how the house has evolved alongside the community around it. The experience not only brings the past to life but also highlights the building's cultural importance in its historical context. I would highly recommend this to anyone with a love of history. It's an enriching experience, surprisingly affordable, and operated through The Box, already mentioned above.

Royal William Yard at Sunset. Photo by Goodsouls (Getty Images)

Theatre Royal

Theatre Royal is easy to spot the building for the twenty three feet 'Messenger' statue standing right in front of it, created by the Cornish artist Joseph Hillier and depicting a fearless girl preparing to run on stage. The venue, capable of hosting up to 1,300 spectators, offers a large variety of performances, including children's plays, musicals, opera and ballet, often coming from larger European or overseas playhouses. If one is curious about local art, one will find it right here.

Shopping

When it comes to shopping venues, Plymouth has two shopping centres right in the heart of the city – the Drake Circus and the nearby Barcode. There, one will be able to find everything necessary, including plenty of clothing, footwear, bookstores and jewellery boutiques, as well as several cafes for a quick snack. To find some local curiosities, pay a Saturday visit to Plymouth street market, buzzing with life and full of peculiar memorabilia with hundreds of stories behind them. For a souvenir for family and friends, one should venture to Royal William Yard, a beautiful Grade I Victorian dock, now hosting multiple independent small shops, galleries, and restaurants, to retreat after a tiring day.

Mount Batten Tower and Breakwater. Photo by Thomas Faull (Getty Images)

RESTAURANTS

Afternoon Tea. Photo by Eva-Katalin (Getty Images)

Nora's

If one is looking for an ambient place to relax after a hard day or to dine with one's partner in a peaceful surroundings, no place could fit better than Nora's. The portions of well-prepared traditional British food, with a delicate modern approach, are quite enough to satisfy the appetite, and the excellent wine would make an amazing accompaniment to the dish. As for gourmets, the restaurant has some interesting options on the menu, such as yuzu-cured salmon, skate wing with samphire, or charred hispi cabbage as a vegetarian option.

Salumi

The tiny blue house can be easily overlooked while being tucked away behind the Duke of Cornwall hotel. And that is a great pity, as it is an ideal place for top-notch dining in a diverse company, with every person having different tastes. The menu, whilst not particularly big, has something for everyone. In addition, some sharing plate options and a great range of drinks are available as well. Apart from standard dishes such as scotch egg or Dartmoor beef, some of the unique tastes Salumi offers include Moroccan cous cous, raspberry and peach trifle, or tiramisu martini.

Almanac Café

For a less chick spot, one may try visiting the Almanac Café. The venue positions itself as a sustainable, zero-waste business, focusing on reasonably priced vegan options made from local products. Some of their best dishes include seitan kebab, bakewell tart, and hazelnut coffee. A lovely, spacious and bright space, perfect if one needs a quick bite to eat or a fancy brunch.

Fletchers

While searching for a fine dining experience for a special occasion, one should certainly stop at the Fletchers. They offer beautifully presented meal samples, including such specialities as braised beef, confit leek, egg yolk gel truffle and cheddar foam, all bursting with flavour and attention to the smallest details. Though the place might be slightly more lavish than other restaurants found in Plymouth, the quality is worth every penny.

The Fig Tree at 36

This restaurant offers a similar experience, so if one does not like to ponder on the menu or wants to try something new and local, The Fig Tree near Royal William Yard would also be a nice option. A proud possessor of Michelin Bib Gourmand, they offer two and three-course luncheons, where the dishes available are Plymouth gin-cured trout, Cornish pork belly, or Doom-bar braised Devon brisket. Everything can be accompanied by a glass of wine from Devonshire, Plymouth gin, or a non-alcoholic spirit of your choice.

Àclèaf

If one is seeking a luxurious and sophisticated luncheon, pay a visit to the Àclèaf. The restaurant had recently won a Michelin star (2025), so it is a new gem for gourmets to discover. The food here is a combination of art and pure joy in every mouthful, and the ingredients are of the best quality. The four-course menu in Àclèaf changes seasonally,

Àclèaf. Photo by Mario Fonseca (Google Reviews)

constantly offering new tastes. For wine enthusiasts, they also offer a wine pairing menu, depending on whether one chooses wagyu, duck, venison, or something sweet, or it is possible to order a separate drink from a vast collection from all around the world.

The Artillery Tower

Another fancy option for an intimate meal would be the Artillery Tower, a restaurant located in a historical 500-year-old building on the bay. Old-fashioned personal service of premium quality dishes from British ingredients prepared by a Michelin-star chef will make every evening unforgettable. As in every place of its kind, every course – be it duck breast, dauphinoise potatoes, almond tart, or crab - can be accompanied by one of the wines on the carefully selected list.

Kuku

A decent option of foreign cuisine is Kuku, a contemporary Japanese one. Apart from great hibachi, sushi, makimono, and nigiri options, the menu includes salads, appetisers, grills, and soups. For larger groups, there are several sharing options: sushi plates to divide among ravenous mouths, or a tasting menu of starters, meat, salad, shrimp, and nigiri. Similar to the 'Indian Rose', Kuku is an affordable option for eating out.

Sato

While being in a hurry to visit every destination and to see as much as possible, it is very important to use the time available wisely. Therefore, a brunch may be an optimal solution to eat one's fill and not dally. Sato may be a tiny café, yet it offers budget-friendly brunch options, including vegan and gluten-free ones. When it comes to grabbing a quick snack, the place also serves nibbles, small plates, and drinks. Additionally, coming to Sato on Thursday from 16 to 18 will get you 20% off every dish.

Cosmic Kitchen

Even though the places above propose a vast choice of cuisines and dishes for individuals with specific diets, they are not fully sustainable for vegans, despite several vegan options. In this case, one might ponder visiting the Cosmic Kitchen, a café fully dedicated to vegetarianism and veganism. In 2021, it was recognised as the first vegan restaurant in the UK, and in 2023, the third vegan restaurant in the whole world. Cosmic Kitchen's menu consists of dishes mainly made from non-animal-derived products, such as salads or falafel, but there are also some adaptations, such as a vegan Scottish egg.

Bonne Santé

If one is looking for a bustling place to enjoy some cocktails accompanied by music and vivid decorations, Bonne Santé might be an ideal solution. Apart from serving traditional burgers, Asian dishes, and steaks, some sharing plates and nibbles can be found here as light snacks for a big, hungry company. Everything can be accompanied by glamorous, vegan-friendly and elegantly decorated cocktails, be it something classic or a chef's speciality, such as lemon meringue pie, smoky old maple, or spiced pineapple mai tai.

Kuku. Photo by Dominic de Suys (Google Reviews)

PROMINENT REDISENTS

The statue of Sir Francis Drake, Plymouth Hoe. Photo by The_doKtor_Dokka (Pixabay)

Francis Drake

Francis Drake was, and presumably is, the most famous resident of Plymouth. He was the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe (1577–1580) and one of the most renowned privateers under the rule of Elizabeth I, having captured tons of Spanish treasures. Even though born in Tavistock and not Plymouth, Sir Francis moved here at a very young age, to a house of a distant family and simultaneously the house of a distinguished captain, William Hawkins, the first Englishman to sail to Brazil. Perhaps it was he who passed the love to the sea to Drake.

But the biggest achievement of Francis Drake is not the glorious voyage or sail, but the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. According to the tale, the vice admiral was playing bowls on Plymouth Hoe when news arrived that the Spanish Armada had been sighted. Drake supposedly said something like "There's time to finish the game", calmly carried on bowling, and only then went off to deal with Spain's biggest naval threat. The wind and tide later shifted in England's favour, sealing the Armada's fate.

William Cookworthy

No Englishman can imagine their house without a white porcelain tea set, painted in flowers, quaint patterns, or featuring the Queen's portrait. Bringing this material from China to misty Albion was an achievement of William Cookworthy, 18th-century apothecary and later manufacturer. After discovering a source of kaolin (china clay) in nearby St Austell in Cornwall, Sir Cookworthy appreciated the miraculous discovery, and long years of work began. Forty-two years have passed since the site opened in 1746 to the establishment of the first factory to produce true hard-paste porcelain in England in 1768.

Even though the factory soon moved to Bristol, Plymouth is an undeniable birthplace of British porcelain, decorating every cupboard nowadays.

Charles Dance

Even though born in Redditch in Worcestershire, celebrated both in England and worldwide, Charles Dance has strong connections to Plymouth. After his father died when little Charlie was only four years old, his mother moved to Plymouth, where her son spent his youth in the city and studied graphic design at Plymouth College of Art before pursuing his acting career. One can confidently agree that this decision was successful for Sir Dance. He started appearing on screens in the early 70s, soon joining the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. In 2006, for his outstanding performances, Charles was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth.

To a modern viewer, Sir Dance is known for such roles as Tywin Lannister in *Game of Thrones* and *The House of the Dragon*, or Lord Mountbatten in *The Crown*.

Robert Lenkiewicz

While not particularly popular and a hugely controversial figure among high-ranking artists, a son of a German baroness and a Polish horse breeder was born in the full swing of the Second World War, in 1941. His artistic career started at the age of 16, when he was accepted into an art school in 1957. Quite soon, Robert managed to establish his own art studio, where he would accept not only

curious visitors, but everyone who needed a roof above their head, frequently people with addictions or mental illnesses. But feeling the pressure from neighbours of the studio, not specifically happy about Robert's generosity, the artist left London in 1964. A year later, he was offered a studio in Plymouth, where, once again, Lenkiewicz started to provide a living space for everyone in desperate need of it. Soon, there were so many guests that Robert started to search for derelict buildings around Plymouth, which would serve both as a home and a new studio.

And it was the most marginalised members of the society who posed for the pictures. Over his life, more than ten thousand pictures appeared from the brush of Lenkiewicz, gaining more and more attention to his figure and lifestyle. Starting as an uncanny artist from London, he finished with his paintings being exhibited in national museums.

After the deaths of the artist in 2002, apart from having left 12 children behind from different women, in his studio also left a corpse of Diogenes, one of the individuals hosted by the studio whom Robert found in a rubbish bin and promised to preserve him a human paperweight rather than burying Diogenes, and the 16th century skeleton of Ursula Kemp in the same room, a midwife who had been hung for witchcraft.

His library, having plenty of books on various topics, was donated to different local organisations in Plymouth and his collection of witchcraft literature was presented to the museum of witchcraft in Boscastle.

Phoebe Hessel

Another remarkable woman who had lived in Plymouth was Phoebe Hessel. She was born in 1712 in London in a family of a soldier, and perhaps, that is where her interest in the military began. Despite being born in a time when women were not gladly seen in the army, the father of Phoebe used to take her to his trainings when she was just a small child. And when Phoebe turned fifteen, she met her first love and future husband – Samuel Golding. He, too, embraced a military career, and after some thoughts, his faithful lady decided to distinguish herself as a man and serve by his side. Together, they fought for the British army for years, taking part in campaigns in Gibraltar, the West Indies, and the Battle of Fontenoy in 1745. The couple was wounded, and Phoebe had no other choice but to reveal her secret to the wife of the Regiment's colonel. Even though both Samuel and Phoebe were discharged, they were given no punishment, and both received their last salary on time.

After finally marrying, the newlyweds settled in Plymouth. Unfortunately, here Goldings were less lucky than on the battlefield; out of nine children that Phoebe bore, eight died in infancy, and the ninth died at sea, though his age at the moment of death is not recorded. Soon, Samuel died as well. Phoebe found a new husband, fisherman Thomas Hessel, and moved with him to Brighton, where she sold fish, oranges, and gingerbreads in a corner of the street near the Brighton Pavilion. After Thomas died at the age of 80, Phoebe found another job at the workhouse, being simultaneously granted a pension of half a guinea per week by George VI, the only Prince of Wales at that time. Phoebe lived long enough to witness his coronation parade in Brighton in 1820, before dying on December 12, 1821, aged 108.

Robert Falcon Scott

To venture into an unknown, frozen land on the other side of the world, one must be tremendously brave. When Robert Falcon Scott decided to sail to Antarctica, he understood what fame it would

bring to him and his country, and therefore decided to join the 1901-1904 Discovery expedition, the first British expedition to the inhospitable continent. There, Sir Robert indeed committed a great discovery of the Antarctic Plateau, on which the South Pole stands. But in his second voyage, from 1910 to 1913, when Falcon Scott tried to become the first person to actually reach the South Pole, he was beaten by a Norwegian explorer by 33 days. On the journey back, the biting cold and severe conditions, sadly, make it its own. Sir Robert and his companion did not return home. But even after death, he helped to make another discovery – from the frozen fingers, the first Antarctic fossils were recovered, a remnant of a prehistoric tree. As trees do not grow in such a climate, it served as another proof that once all of the continents were connected.

Cora Pearl

Despite the high moral standards of the Victorian Era and, seemingly, condemnation of carnal love, that time was the peak of courtesan activity. Eliza Emma Crouch, later known as Cora Pearl, was one of them. Her early life was full of challenges – her father, cellist Frederick Crouch, left the family when Eliza was five; her mother, Lydia Pearson, later found another man, with whom she had two more children, but the relationship between Richard Littley and his stepdaughter turned out to be quite tense.

From Plymouth, Eliza moved to a convent in Boulogne for education; yet when she returned to London at the age of fifteen, she was raped by an older man, who lured her away by buying several cakes and drinks, later drugged, and took advantage of her. After the incident, Eliza decided not to return to her family. She worked as a milliner in London, but her low-wages could not grant the life she dreamt of. Perhaps the acquaintance with Robert Bignell, owner of the Argyll Rooms, the pleasure establishment, was her stroke of luck. Crouch, weighing her position and chances in life, became one of his mistresses. There, she made enough connections to move to Paris and adopt the pseudonym of Cora Pearl.

And from now on, she slowly moved towards becoming one of the most famous and wealthy courtesans of the 19th century. But as strange as it sounds, Cora herself openly stated her hatred of the opposite sex, referring to the incident in her youth that left her with 'an instinctive horror of men'. But it seems that it was exactly what her clients found attractive in her; Pearl, deciding to allow no one and no more take advantage of her, kept several patrons simultaneously. That way, she never 'belonged' to anyone.

Such behaviour was scandalous enough, but what caused a real storm was her acquaintance with Napoleon III. Despite the fact that he wasn't particularly attracted by her, the prince developed a distinct wish to show that his money and power could do extraordinary things, and one of them was keeping Cora as his mistress only. Yet when she rejected the generous offer, Napoleon threatened to exile Pearl from France, and that is where she had to obey. He set her up in the finest house in Paris on the Rue de Chaillot and another in Rue des Bassins, as well as a mansion in the countryside. Using the excuse of a constant need to keep her possessions in order, Cora spent much time away from Napoleon and did not cease to meet with other patrons.

Her decline began after the Duval affair, when her lover, spending an entire fortune on presents and luxuries, was dismissed by Cora due to his funds exhausting and his behaviour showing signs of obsession. In 1872, Alexander entered her house with the intent to murder Pearl, yet the weapon accidentally fired at him instead. The young man had recovered, yet such a scandal was too big even for Cora. Two years later, Prince Napoleon ended the relationship with her as well. By 1883,

she had to return to common prostitution, and in 1886, Pearl had died at the age of 49 due to intestinal cancer.

Trevor Francis

England is, indisputably, the true motherland of football and its great patron. It had brought many celebrated teams and individuals to the world, and Plymouth also made its share here. Trevor John Francis, born in the family of a foreman and tailor with modest prosperity, was destined to become Britain's first £1 million player at Nottingham Forest club. This sum is fully justified – in 1979 and 1980, Trevor won two European Cups, and overall played 52 matches for England. Considering he also played for the clubs overseas, for example, in the US, Italy, Scotland and Australia, Francis creates not only an example of one of the most successful players in English history, but also an example of a simple boy from a simple family who received a fair payment for his work, endeavour and effort.

Beryl Cook

The most prominent artist from Plymouth is, unquestionably, Beryl Cook. Her paintings can be easily recognised due to a specific artstyle and ways to portray a person. Yet throughout her life, she constantly moved across the whole world, being born in Surrey, moving to Zimbabwe in her 30s, then settling in Cornwall, and, finally, in 1968, on Plymouth Hoe.

One interesting thing about Miss Cook is that she never received a formal artistic education. Her love for art became distinctively visible only on 1960s, when she was married for over ten years with a young son. She worked on her pictures as an amateur, combining her hobby with everyday chores. A real career was launched after the unique paintings were noticed by one of the guests visiting the Cook family, who helped Beryl to contact Plymouth Art Centre. Quite unexpectedly, just after her first exhibition ever, The Sunday Times decided to put one of her artworks on its cover. And already in 1976, bright pictures left Plymouth for the Portal Gallery in London, leaving only in 2008, after the passing of Miss Beryl Cook.

Despite being recognised as one of the most popular English living artists during her lifetime, there were plenty of critics who dismissed her artworks. Simple figures and colours, specific to her style, often featuring plus-size, middle-class women, drag queens, or sensual bodies, were viewed as something rather low-brow and unworthy of such publicity surge. Yet, needless to say, Beryl's career did not cease after bitter words. In 1994, she received the Best-Selling Published Artist Award from the Fine Art Trade Guild; a year later, she was awarded the Order of the British Empire, though she officially received it in 1996 in her home, Plymouth, as she was too shy to attend an official ceremony in London. Another prominent Janner, Dawn French, took part in voicing an animated film, featuring figurines from Cook's artworks.

After her death, over 500 paintings made during her lifetime were distributed to the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, Bristol Art Gallery, Plymouth Art Gallery and Durham Museum.

Sir Joshua Reynolds

Another artist worth attention lived many years before Robert Lenkiewicz. But he, similarly, rose to a great fame from a family with humble origins. Extravagant colours and innovative brush strokes were initially criticised, yet the numerous customers of Sir Joshua, including the Duchess of

Devonshire, famous actors and courtesans though otherwise. In fact, having drawn almost two thousand portraits, Reynolds can be confidently called the leading British artist of the 18th century. His technique included adapting the methods of Rembrandt, Rubens, and Titians combined with classical poses, creating a special atmosphere around the elites of society. In 1768, Sir Joshua decided to pass his knowledge to future generations and established the Royal Academy of Arts in London, open to visitors to this day.

Angela Rippon

Another inspiring figure is Angela Rippon. Despite being in an honourable age of 81 (as of 2026), she seems to bloom and flourish. A future journalist and broadcaster was born in 1944, when Plymouth was still trying to come to its senses after horrible German raids. Her mother was a seamstress, and her father returned from the war only in 1947. Angela demonstrated an interest in journalism and TV already at 17, when she left school for the photographic office of the Western Morning News. At 21, she began working on a television in BBC South West. Years of hard work brought their results in 1975, when Angela was first offered to replace one of her colleagues on holiday on Nine O'Clock News, but later stayed here permanently, becoming the first woman to read the news regularly on the BBC and the third woman news presenter to appear on national broadcasts. Two years later, she was also given a chance to host the 1977 Eurovision Song Contest in London, and in 1981, co-presented the wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana.

Lewis Pugh

Another prominent sportsman from Plymouth, apart from Trevor Francis, is, indisputably, Lewis Pugh. Though his life was spent in two countries – the United Kingdom, where he grew up, and South Africa, where he studied politics and law. But simultaneously, Lewis had another passion – swimming, which eventually brought him more fame than his university degrees. It all started when Pugh was seventeen years old, in 1986, and in 1992, he already swum across the English Channel. The first record started already a year later, with a 10-mile swim (approx. 16km) from Robben Island to Cape Town. Then, in 1992, he took part in swimming across the English Channel and became the first person to swim across Lake Malawi, roughly 47 miles (75 km) at its widest point. Pugh's other achievements include being the first to swim at 80° North, the first to swim across the Geographic North Pole, the first person to swim the full length of the English Channel... a lot of 'being first' records, but one that Lewis is most known for is the first person to complete a long-distance swim in every ocean of the world.

Thanks to the numerous accomplishments connected to oceans, Pugh is currently appointed as a UN Patron of the Oceans.

Kate Louise Nesbitt

Kate Nesbitt was born on 21st of April 1988 in Whitleigh. Her father, Clive Nesbitt, made a career in Royal Marines, where he served for 22 years; and his love to the sea had been passed to his daughter. She, too, joined the Royal Navy in 2005, and even though she was not the only woman there, her achievements in navy force. Just three years later, in 2008, a conflict in Afghanistan escalated greatly. Kate had been sent there and stationed for two month, as a medical assistant in 3 Commando Brigade. There, on 12 March 2009, 21-year-old-woman together with her squad got caught into a Taliban ambush; yet Kate successfully delivered emergency aid for Lance Corporal John List, saving his life. For this act of bravery, she was honoured the Military Cross, becoming the

second woman in the British Armed Forces, and first in the Royal Navy, to be awarded such a medal.

Steven Bartlett

Even though Steven is not a resident of Plymouth, but an alumnus here at Plymstock School, I had thought he deserved to be on the list of prominent people from the city. His story is another example of victory despite his life not initially being a bed of roses. Currently, Bartlett is a successful entrepreneur and investor, with his podcast, The Diary of a CEO, becoming the second most popular worldwide in 2025 and receiving an award from Forbes 30 under 30 in 2020 for his multimillion-dollar projects. But when Steven was born in Botswana, in a family of an Englishman and a Botswanan lady who could neither read nor write, what could indicate that the future of Steven would be most prominent?

The list of co-ownership of Bartlett continues even now, with his latest acquisitions including Flightcast, Ketone-IQ and Stan Store.

Dawn French

Though Welsh-born, both parents of Dawn French are from Plymouth, which theoretically awards her with Janner blood. Starring in numerous films and shows, Dawn is primarily known and loved for her comedy sketches and sitcoms, such as *French and Saunders* or *The Vicar of Dibley*. In their time, those two BBC series were a massive success in the country, forever written in the history of British TV as one of the most-watched shows. Some of Dawn's other achievements include being named the most admired female celebrity among women in Britain and receiving a BAFTA award.

Apart from appearing on screens, French also published several books - *Dear Fatty, A Tiny Bit Marvellous*, and *Because of You*, all quite successful and hugely popular far beyond her fan base.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

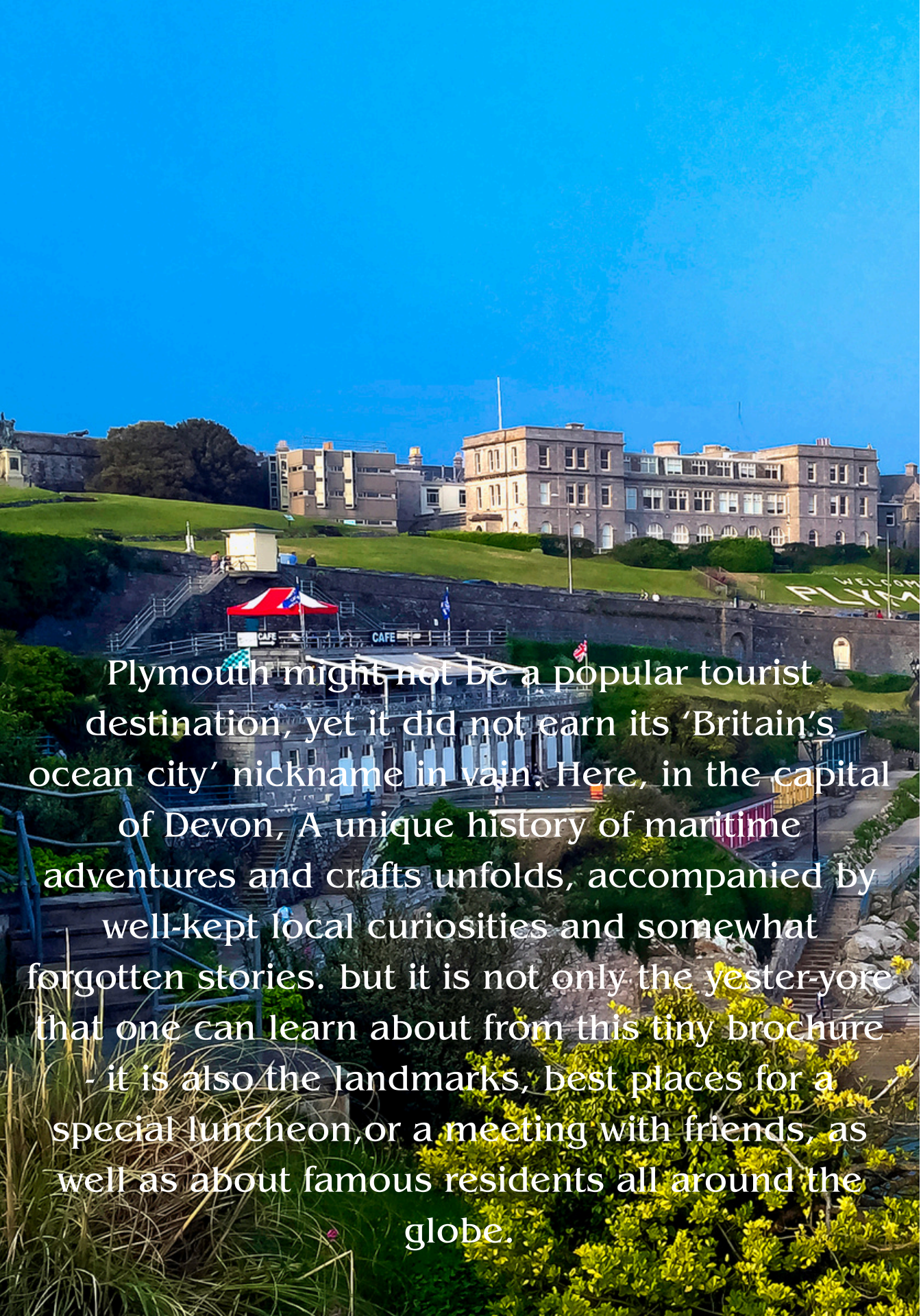
Gracie (Glafira Regina Osypest) is an indie author, focused on the culture of the United Kingdom. She became an author a year ago by publishing *Britannia: A Modern Guide To An Ancient Kingdom*, followed by the 'Essential Guide to Truro' and 'Everything You Need To Know About Cornwall'. All of them are available to download for free in Google Play Books or in Apple Books (just write the names in the search bar). Gracie's mission is to share the beauty of the country with everyone and make it as accessible as possible. She also uses her blog in social medias (links in the beginning of the book) to share additional information.

Gracie has numerous hobbies, which include reading books and watching films (book and film reviews can be found in her Instagram blog), cross-stitching, stitching, sewing, cooking, photography and writing. On top of that, Gracie learns several languages and speaks six, starting from German and ending with Macedonian, and currently learns Cornish and French.

Gracie's other books:

Britannia: A Modern Guide To An Ancient Kingdom
An Essential Guide To Truro
Everything You Need to Know About Cornwall

All of her works are free and are accessible online. Her initiative to promote British culture can be supported via Buy Me a Coffee (links at the beginning)



Plymouth might not be a popular tourist destination, yet it did not earn its ‘Britain’s ocean city’ nickname in vain. Here, in the capital of Devon, A unique history of maritime adventures and crafts unfolds, accompanied by well-kept local curiosities and somewhat forgotten stories. but it is not only the yester-yore that one can learn about from this tiny brochure - it is also the landmarks, best places for a special luncheon,or a meeting with friends, as well as about famous residents all around the globe.